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SHOOTING IN CONNECTICUT

Gunman forced way into Conn. school; motive unclear

Children and adults all were shot multiple times in swift massacre

By **Mark Arsenault and Travis Andersen** | GLOBE STAFF DECEMBER 15, 2012

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A group of teenagers placed some flowers beneath the school sign at the entrance to Sandy Hook School in Newtown, Conn., one day after the shootings.

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NEWTOWN, Conn. — The gunman forced his way into the school and unleashed a rain of bullets from a semiautomatic rifle, striking each of his 6- and 7-year-old victims more than once, in an attack that lasted just a few minutes.

The six adults also killed Friday morning in the Sandy Hook Elementary School were also each shot multiple times in a massacre of innocents that has deeply shocked a nation sadly familiar with mass shootings.

President Obama will visit Newtown on Sunday to meet the families who lost loved ones and to thank first responders, the White House said in a statement. The president will speak at an interfaith vigil scheduled for 7 p.m.

Authorities on Saturday did not explain exactly how the heavily armed shooter, 20-year-old Adam Lanza, got into the school, and have not yet offered a possible motivation for the slaughter.

“I can’t say that we know [the] motive,” said State Police Lieutenant J. Paul Vance. “We haven’t reached that determination, that culmination yet of the investigation.”

State Police on Saturday released the names of the 26 victims slain in the attack, including the school’s principal, Dawn Hochsprung. Each of the children, 12 girls and eight boys, was born in either 2005 or 2006, according to the police.

Dr. H. Wayne Carver II, state medical examiner, said at a briefing Saturday that he personally examined the bodies of seven first-graders, each dressed in “cute kids’ stuff,” and each of whom had been shot between three and 11 times.

“I’ve been at this for a third of a century,” said Carver. “And my sensibilities may not be [that of] the average man. But this probably is the worst I have seen, or the worst that I know of any of my colleagues having seen.”

Lanza’s mother, Nancy, also was found shot dead Friday at her nearby home. News outlets originally reported that Nancy Lanza was a teacher at the Sandy Hook school, but police said Saturday that she had not worked there.

Though the shooter had at least two handguns with him during his attack, the primary weapon appears to have been a Bushmaster .223 semiautomatic rifle, according to multiple news reports.

Carver said the gun’s bullets are designed to inflict a “very devastating set of injuries,” suggesting that the victims died quickly.

Lanza apparently killed himself after the attack. Carver said that while he did not want to “belabor the obvious,” he could not officially rule that Adam Lanza’s wounds were self-

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inflicted until he examines the body on Sunday.

Adam Lanza remains something of a mystery, known well by few, if any, in the town where he is now infamous.

Mario De Vivo, who graduated from Newtown High School a year before Lanza, could not immediately recall the shooter when he first heard the name, he said. But then a friend reminded him: the “briefcase kid.”

While his peers slung backpacks over their shoulder, Lanza carried a dark briefcase through his high school halls, a row of pens neatly lined up in the pocket of his button-down shirt. His oddly formal outfit varied so little, students had wondered if he wore the same shirt every day.

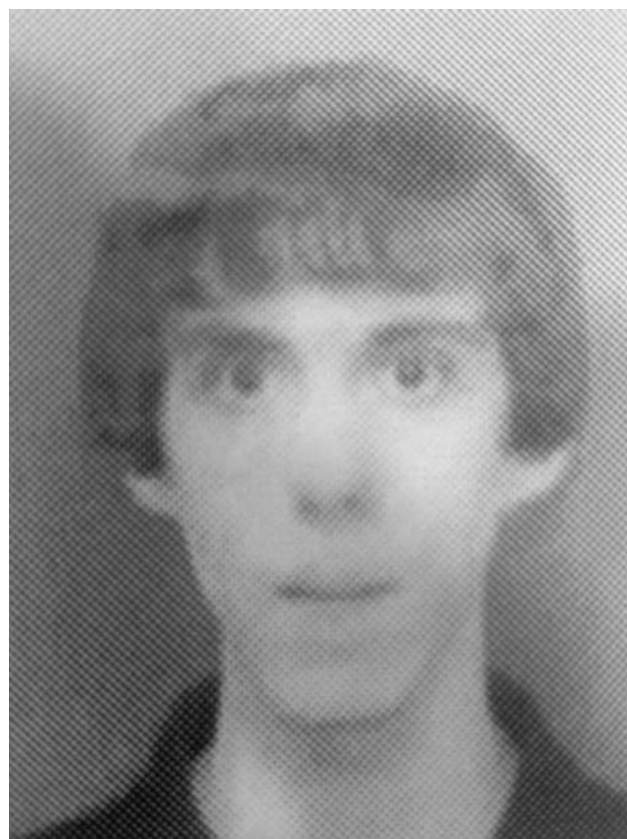
People knew him as smart, an honor roll regular, a computer whiz who loved video games. One classmate described him as a genius. But they also knew he was so reclusive and painfully awkward that even well-meaning students struggled to interact with him.

“He was a loner, for sure,” said De Vivo.

Lanza was born in Kingston, N.H. Outside the Kingston home of Lanza’s uncle, James Champion, on Saturday, two men identified themselves as family friends and said the family did not want to speak with reporters.

Later Saturday evening in Kingston, Michael Downing, the Rockingham County sheriff, gave a statement on behalf of the Lanza and Champion families, “who share the grief of a community and a nation as we struggle to comprehend the tremendous loss that we all share. . . . On behalf of Nancy’s mother and siblings, we reach out to the community of Newtown and express our heartfelt sorrow for the incomprehensible and profound loss of innocence that has affected so many.”

On Saturday, the community Adam Lanza so thoroughly devastated responded with its own messages of condolence, posted in storefronts, at churches, and at homes. They included: “Our hearts are broken,”



NBC NEWS

This is believed to be a photo of Adam Lanza.

scrawled on a chalkboard; “Hug a teacher today,” crudely printed on a sheet hung from a window; and “God bless the families,” sprayed-painted on a piece of plywood.

A sign outside St. Rose of Lima Catholic Church said it would be open 24 hours. Families with young children visited the church Saturday morning, some stopping at candles set up outside. Mourners added a soccer ball, a doll, and flowers.

Around town, the expressions on most faces were grim. Some people cried quietly, others seemed to struggle not to. Stricken with grief and overwhelmed by the immense media presence, some declined to talk to reporters and shied away from cameras. Several people appeared upset as they told reporters and photographers to leave them and their community alone.

Due to the media presence, police investigators, and road closures to keep people away from the school, traffic backed up on most thoroughfares in town.

The sidewalks crawled with TV anchors in long coats and photographers with hands red from the cold.

State Police parked silver cruisers in driveways around Sandy Hook, turning reporters away from the homes of families.

Churches in Massachusetts will address the tragedy in Sunday services, and Cardinal Sean O’Malley will deliver a homily on the shootings at an 11:30 a.m. Mass at Cathedral of the Holy Cross in Boston’s South End.

A fuller picture of some of the lives taken began to come into focus yesterday.

Lauren Gabrielle Rousseau, a 30-year-old permanent substitute teacher killed at Sandy Hook, had just celebrated one year dating her boyfriend, said her mother, Teresa Rousseau, a copy editor at the Danbury News-Times.

“She died at a really happy point in her life,” she said in a phone interview Saturday. “I’m just happy I was able to enjoy her for as long as I did.”

After working as an occasional substitute at Sandy Hook,

Victims at school

Charlotte Bacon, 6
Daniel Barden, 7
Rachel Davino, 29
Olivia Engel, 6
Josephine Gay, 7
Dylan Hockley, 6
Dawn Hochsprung, 47,
school principal
Madeleine F. Hsu, 6
Catherine V. Hubbard, 6
Chase Kowalski, 7
Jesse Lewis, 6
Ana M. Marquez-Greene, 6
James Mattioli, 6
Grace McDonnell, 7
Anne Marie Murphy, 52
Emilie Parker, 6
Jack Pinto, 6
Noah Pozner, 6
Caroline Previdi, 6
Jessica Rekos, 6
Avielle Richman, 6
Lauren Rousseau, 30
Mary Sherlach, 56
Victoria Soto, 27
Benjamin Wheeler, 6
Allison N. Wyatt, 6

Lauren had just recently been hired as one of the school's two permanent substitute teachers, filling in any time someone was out, according to her mother.

Lauren sent a text message at 8:45 a.m. — about 45 minutes before the rampage — to her boyfriend, making Friday night dinner plans. It was the last time she would be heard from.

Lauren loved to read, take photos, and go to Broadway plays, her mother said. “She was doing a whirlwind of fun things with her boyfriend.”

The Associated Press, citing town officials, said Hochsprung, 47, was killed while lunging at the gunman in an attempt to overtake him.

Lori V. Quigley, dean of the Esteves School of Education at The Sage Colleges in Troy and Albany, NY., said Hochsprung had been accepted last spring in the school's doctorate in educational leadership program.

"The first time I met Dawn is when I welcomed the 15 new students into the program at a dinner this past summer," said Quigley, in a telephone interview Saturday. "The sad irony of this is that she is the one person of the group who I truly do remember.

"Right off the bat, her professors and her peers could see the reason she was pursuing her doctoral studies was to improve the way she and her staff . . . could make children's lives better," said Quigley. "It wasn't all about her. She was never that way. Ever. That's what stuck me and impressed me. That plus her smile. Her smile was genuine."

Amid all the suffering in Newtown, Robert Parker, the father of 6-year-old shooting victim Emilie Parker, responded with uncommon grace on Saturday, offering condolences to all the families devastated by the attack, including Lanza's.

In addressing reporters, Parker described his daughter as an exceptional artist who loved to draw a picture for anyone feeling sad or frustrated.

He asked Americans to hold on to the feelings of love for family, and compassion for strangers, that the tragedy has inspired.

"May we do this," he said, "so we can better all of our communities, and all of our cities, and all of our states so that we can make everyone everywhere in this country feel safe."

Martine Powers and Peter Schworm of the Globe staff and Globe correspondents Matt Rocheleau, Jaclyn Reiss, Gal Tziperman Lotan, and Derek J. Anderson contributed to this report. Mark Arsenault can be reached at arsenault@globe.com. Follow him on Twitter [@bostonglobemark](https://twitter.com/bostonglobemark).

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